



*News From*

# Maggie Brooks

## *Monroe County Executive*

**For Immediate Release**

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## **BROOKS: BUDGET CRISIS SOLVED; PROPERTY TAXES CUT; NEGATIVE WATCH REMOVED**

*Fourth Consecutive Balanced Budget Cuts Spending  
and Protects Quality-of-Life Services*

Stating that “*we have solved the County’s budget crisis while cutting the property tax rate, cutting spending and protecting vital services*”, **Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks** outlined the details of her fourth Monroe County budget this afternoon before an audience in the Monroe County Legislative Chambers. Accounting for one-time measures, the County Executive’s 2008 operating budget of \$863,307,700 cuts spending 3.9% from the previous year, cuts the property tax rate from \$9.10 to \$8.99, and maintains critical funding for vital services.

### **Budget Crisis Solved**

The 2008 budget implements the County Executive’s F.A.I.R. plan, which ends the County’s structural budget deficit, and stabilizes the County’s finances for the long-term. Through the enactment of the F.A.I.R. plan, the 2008 budget is fully-balanced, and forecasts a fund balance of \$500,000 through FY 2010.

As proof of the County Executive’s success in charting a course from crisis to comeback, Fitch Ratings informed Monroe County today that they will be removing their negative credit watch.

“*Our 2008 budget is balanced, solves the budget crisis, cuts the property tax rate, and protects quality of life services,*” **County Executive Brooks** stated. “*It maintains the Morin-Ryan agreement, and for the first time in many years forecasts a fund balance, rather than a deficit...even Wall Street agrees that we are moving in the right direction. This is why I am proud to announce that Fitch will be removing our County’s negative credit watch; an incredible vote of confidence in our path from crisis to comeback.*”

### **Cuts Property Tax Rate from \$9.10 to \$8.99**

As part of the 2008 County budget, County Executive Brooks has proposed a cut in the property tax rate from \$9.10 to \$8.99. Unveiled originally as part of the County

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## **2008 Budget**

### **Page 2 of 4**

Executive's F.A.I.R. plan, this budget keeps faith with Monroe County's hard-working property taxpayers, and delivers real tax relief to the citizens of our community.

*"Our hard-working property taxpayers deserve real tax relief, and my budget delivers," Brooks continued. "Cutting the property tax rate acknowledges the many sacrifices made every day by our hard-working property taxpayers. It will play an important role in our continued and successful efforts to grow our economy, create jobs, and improve our quality-of-life".*

### **Cuts Spending by 3.9%**

Due to the County Executive's continued and successful efforts to streamline government, the proposed 2008 operating budget reduces spending over the previous year's levels. Accounting for one-time measures, the 2008 operating budget of \$863,307,700 cuts spending by 3.9%. This cut in spending has been brought about through the implantation of the County Executive's F.A.I.R. Plan, as well as a continued emphasis on making County government leaner, and more cost-effective.

New measures delivering budgetary savings include:

- The reduction of County health care costs by \$1.2 million through the enactment of a wellness program for County employees.
- Personnel efficiencies and department reengineering save over \$750,000
- Office technology savings of 25% or \$250,000
- Intermunicipal agreements with the Greece and Webster Police Departments will lower Monroe County costs by \$27,000
- Expenses for office supplies, cell phones, travel, mileage and memberships have been reduced by 4%

*"I have never forgotten that every cent accumulated by government is a cent not resting in the pockets of our taxpayers. All of us in government have a responsibility to provide critical government services at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayers, and this budget does just that. My proposed operating budget actually cuts spending by 3.9%, and as we have done throughout my time as County Executive, in 2008 we will continue to employ new measures to make our County government leaner and more cost-effective," Brooks continued.*

### **Medicaid Burden Eliminated**

For the first time, the 2008 County budget includes the State's Medicaid Swap as adopted through the County Executive's F.A.I.R. plan. The County Legislature heeded the County Executive's call to opt-in to the State's Medicaid Swap option in September. Medicaid costs had previously comprised nearly 35% of the total net County budget, and had risen by 60% since 2000.

## **2008 Budget**

### **Page 3 of 4**

The continued and unprecedented growth of this program's costs was the principal driver of the County's structural budget deficit, which was projected to top \$100 million by 2009. Through the enactment of State's Medicaid Swap, Monroe County's Medicaid costs have now been permanently lifted from the backs of our property taxpayers.

*"The rising costs of the State's Medicaid program drove our County's structural budget deficit, and placed our property taxpayers at risk for far too long. Due to the enactment of my F.A.I.R. plan, the cost of Medicaid has finally been lifted from the backs of our property taxpayers, and will stabilize our County finances for many years to come,"*  
**Brooks** continued.

### **Government Partners, Tax Credit, Vital Services Remain Fully-Funded**

County Executive Brooks' proposed 2008 budget continues her long-standing commitment to protecting vital services, as well as protecting her sales-tax sharing partners in local government. The budget continues the historic Morin-Ryan sales tax sharing formula, continues the town tax credit, and also implements the new inter-municipal sharing agreements approved by the County Legislature as part of the County Executive's F.A.I.R. plan that keeps the City of Rochester, as well as town and village governments fully funded.

Under the County Executive's 2008 budget:

- The City of Rochester will remain fully-funded at \$125,979,424. This includes \$82,910,035 in sales tax revenue, as well as \$43,069,389 in County support.
- Monroe County towns will remain fully-funded at \$83,567,235. This figure includes \$40,254,723 in sales tax revenue, as well as \$43,312,512 in County support. Additionally, town taxpayers will see their local tax credit continued through this budget.
- Monroe County villages will remain fully funded at \$8,943,765. This figure includes \$4,818,803 in sales tax revenue, as well as \$4,124,962 in County support.
- Suburban school districts would continue to be funded through the Morin-Ryan agreement, and would receive \$29,540,404 in sales tax revenues. Through the utilization of record state aid, these school districts would realize a net increase of \$9,750,575 over the previous year.

**2008 Budget**  
**Page 4 of 4**

The continuation of funding to the City of Rochester, as well as Monroe County's towns and villages will enable these localities to safeguard vital services, such as law enforcement. Additionally, the County's budget does not interrupt important quality-of-life services, such as funding for parks or libraries.

*"The budget honors the historic Morin-Ryan sales tax sharing formula, fully funds the tax credit extended to town residents, and also implements new inter-municipal sharing agreements approved by the County Legislature as part of my F.A.I.R. plan,"* continued **Brooks**.

**Implementation of Project SAVE**

The 2008 Budget will also incorporate a new plan to reduce welfare costs, realize improved outcomes for children and families, and achieve significant savings through reduced caseloads in the Department of Human Services (DHS). Through the implementation of Project SAVE, Monroe County will utilize a \$1.3 million state grant to hire and train new caseworkers to fill existing vacancies within DHS.

By implementing this program, Monroe County will realize savings of \$13.4 million over the next four years due to the reduction in welfare and foster care caseloads at DHS. New strategies will be implemented to allow those needing services that are capable of becoming self-sufficient to become self-sufficient more quickly.

Project SAVE will introduce pro-active strategies so that individuals and families learn to cope, survive and succeed. Implementing Project SAVE will enable Monroe County to reduce the caseload maintained by our caseworkers, and enable more public assistance recipients to enter the workforce, and achieve economic stability in greater numbers.

*"Implementation of Project SAVE is a win for our community. It will reduce costs for taxpayers by \$13.4 million over the next four years. More of our citizens will move from welfare to work. More children will stay with their families as we shorten time in foster care,"* continued **Brooks**.

The County Executive's 2008 budget will be formally presented to the County Legislature at their November 13, 2007 meeting.

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*Media Inquiries, contact:*  
*Department of Communications at 753-1080*